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LAOS: THE CONTINUING CAMPAIGN

ANNCR:

IN LAOS, FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMUNIST PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC, A CAMPAIGN CONTINUES AGAINST WHAT'S OFFICIALLY TERMED, "REACTIONARY" AND "BOURGEOIS" ELEMENTS. VOA'S JOSEPH KUN HAS THE DETAILS.

VOICE:

THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN LAOS IS RECEIVING DAILY PLAY IN THE DOMESTIC LAO MEDIA. BUT FOR THE OUTSIDE WORLD, THE FINER DETAILS HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED BY WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS REPORTING FROM VIENTIANE AND OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN CAPITALS. AMONG THESE, A REUTER REPORT FROM VIENTIANE NOTES THE ARREST IN EARLY APRIL OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN THE LAO CAPITAL SAID TO REPRESENT SO-CALLED "REACTIONARY" ELEMENTS. THE CAMPAIGN IS SAID TO BE AIMED AT FERRETING OUT UNDESIRABLE REMNANTS OF WESTERN CULTURE AND BOURGEOIS LIFE STYLES. MOST OF THOSE ARRESTED HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN SENT TO RE-EDUCATION CENTERS FOR WORK AND POLITICAL SEMINARS.

JONATHAN ROLLOW, WHO WAS IN VIENTIANE JUST PRIOR TO THE APRIL ARRESTS, OBSERVES THAT THE NEW LAO AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN CLIPPING OFF SOME OF THE MOST NOTICEABLE VESTIGES OF WESTERN INFLUENCE....LONG HAIR, BELL-BOTTOM TROUSERS, AND THE LIKE. THESE OUTWARD CHANGES, HE SAYS IN AN ARTICLE FOR THE "WASHINGTON POST," ARE ONLY A PART OF THE CAMPAIGN TO INSTILL A DEEPER SENSE OF NATIONAL PRIDE AND INDEPENDENCE IN AN ETHNICALLY-MIXED POPULATION LONG EXPOSED TO FOREIGN INFLUENCE. THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, HE ADDS, IS ALSO TRYING TO AWAKEN THE LAO PEOPLE TO THE NEED FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN A COUNTRY THAT CAN NO LONGER RELY ON WESTERN ECONOMIC HELP FOR ITS EXISTENCE.

MISTER ROLLOW OBSERVES THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT IS FACING SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS. SOME OF THESE, HE WRITES, STEM FROM HE COMMUNIST REGIME'S HOSTILITY TOWARD THE THAI GOVERNMENT, WHICH RESULTED IN THE CUTTING OFF OF THE FLOW OF IMPORTED GOODS THROUGH THAILAND. DIPLOMATS IN VIENTIANE, HE ADDS, ARE INCLINED TO ATTRIBUTE VIENTIANE'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES TO THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP'S ALLEGIANCE TO COLLECTIVE DECISION MAKING, AS WELL AS TO THE SHORTAGE OF ECONOMIC EXPERTISE, AND THE RELUCTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS TO TAKE INITIATIVES ON THEIR OWN.

MISTER ROLLOW SAYS THAT DESPITE THE NOISE OF THE INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM IN LAOS, IT HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT IN A MILD MANNER COMPARED WITH THAT IN NEIGHBORING CAMBODIA. ABOVE ALL, HE CONCLUDES, THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF EXECUTIONS IN LAOS.

"WASHINGTON POST" CORRESPONDENT LEWIS SIMONS REPORTS FROM BANGKOK THAT THE PATHET LAO UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE A WELL-DEFINED CONCEPT OF WHAT CHANGES MUST BE BROUGHT TO THEIR COUNTRY. AND THESE CHANGES, HE SAYS, HAVE BEEN PROPOUNDED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF COMMUNIST RULE AT DAILY SEMINARS WHICH EVERYONE OLD ENOUGH TO WALK AND YOUNG ENOUGH NOT TO BE CONFINED TO BE MUST ATTEND.

JS/RCS